They Went to College: The College Graduate in America Today. by Ernest Havemann; Patricia Salter West
Review by: August B. Hollingshead
American Sociological Review, Vol. 17, No. 5 (Oct., 1952), pp. 640-641
Published by: American Sociological Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2088248
Accessed: 13/12/2014 09:52

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

American Sociological Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Sociological Review*.

http://www.jstor.org

This content downloaded from 128.235.251.160 on Sat, 13 Dec 2014 09:52:03 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

They Went to College: The College Graduate in America Today. By ERNEST HAVEMANN and PATRICIA SALTER WEST. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952. v, 277 pp. $4.00.

They Went to College is based on a survey of U. S. college graduates made by *Time Magazine* in late 1947. The data were analyzed by the Columbia University Bureau of Applied Social Research. Somewhere in the process, the junior author, Patricia Salter West, entered the picture. She did the work involved in the drawing of conclusions, and was rewarded for her efforts by a Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia University. The next step in the book's evolution appears to have been the assignment of the senior author to the project by *Time* or *Life*. The net result is an attractive *Time-Life* styled product.

The book's 52 charts are constructed in the best tradition of modern graphic art. Its 23 chapters present a plethora of conclusions and inferences drawn from 9,064 answers of American college graduates to a questionnaire sent them by *Time's* researchers. The easily read conclusions range from the authors' discovery that there are many kinds of colleges, and college graduates, to what is wrong with the colleges and college students.

It is almost axiomatic today that the data of a survey are no better than the methods used to gather them. This survey was dependent upon (1) the cooperation of the 1,229 degree-granting institutions in the nation for lists of their graduates; and (2) the willingness of graduates to answer questionnaires. *Time Magazine* asked all institutions to cooperate, but only 1,037 (84.4 per cent) did. Each cooperating institution was asked to furnish *Time's* researchers (1) a list of all its graduates whose surnames began with "Fa," (2) each graduate's class, (3) last known address, (4) degrees earned, (5) major subject, (6) sex, and (7) color. In October, 1947, a thirteen page questionnaire was mailed to each of the 17,053 graduates on the lits; in November, 1947, a second mailing was made to the non-respondents; and in January, 1948, 419 individuals were interviewed. "Full data" were assembled on 9,483 (55.6 per cent of the total) by the use of the questionnaires and the interviews.

The authors both assume and assert the "Fa" segment of names is representative of all college graduates, but the argument they present to support this assertion is unconvincing. What little data they present on this point indicates their total potential segmental sample is open to query. Spatial limits preclude the elaboration of this point.

The 9,064 graduates who returned questionnaires are the spokesmen for the 4,717,000 individuals who had completed four years of college as of 1947 (U. S. Bureau of Census, sample census, April, 1947). Although the authors tell us in the first paragraph of the Appendix that, "The 9,064 repliers are—with the partial exceptions which are noted later—believed to be generally representative of the living college graduate population of the United States" (p. 267), evidence to support it is not presented in the remainder of this three and one-third page document on method. Approximately two-thirds of a page is allotted to blank lines to show what the cooperating institutions were supposed to furnish *Time* on each graduate. Another two-thirds of a page is used to tabulate the number and percentage of cooperating institutions by geographical area and type of educational specialization. This latter table is straightforward and, to this reviewer, laudable, but the crucial question of the distribution of respondents by geographical area and by type of educational institution are conspicuous by their absence. However, the breakdowns on the number of respondents and non-respondents to the questionnaire are given. The authors also state that they compared the replies received from the first wave of questionnaires with those received from the second wave, and the 419 personal interviews. They admit that in a series of significance tests between these three sets of data, significant differences appeared in 51.4 per cent of the items tested. But in the analysis, the data are treated as if these differences did not exist.

The salient question of whether or not the 53.1 per cent graduates in the total segmental sample who answered the first and second waves of questionnaires is representative of the whole sample is completely ignored. Comparisons could have been made easily between those graduates who replied to the questionnaires and those who did not by (1) type of college, (2) year graduated, (3) geographical area, (4) degrees earned, (5) major subject, (6) sex, and (7) color to determine if the 9,064 graduates who completed their questionnaires were representative of the total sample. No hint is given either in the text or the methodological appendix that such comparisons were made. If they were not made, we have no assurance that the effective sample used in the analysis is representative *even* of the "Fa" segment of college graduates from the 1,037 cooperating institutions.

In the opinion of this reviewer, it is unfortunate that these methodological questions were not faced in the appendix. The authors of such a book as this owe it to their readers to demonstrate the validity of their methods. Perhaps the

This content downloaded from 128.235.251.160 on Sat, 13 Dec 2014 09:52:03 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions

methodological inadequacies discussed here can be defended on the grounds that the survey was taken before the pollsters were rudely awakened in November, 1948. On the other hand, the book was written after this happened. Thus, we end with the thought that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link.

AUGUST B. HOLLINGSHEAD
Yale University

Big Business as the People See It. By BURTON R. FISHER and STEPHEN B. WITHEY. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Survey Research Center Series, Publication No. 6, 1951. xiii, 200 pp. No price indicated.

"How the people see 'big business,' instead of the technical evaluations of the economist, legislator or administrator, was investigated in a survey made in October 1950 by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. The persons interviewed—a national sample of 1227 adults—were chosen on a probability basis and represent a cross section of the American Public." This sentence, taken from the first page of this report, states about as simply and clearly as could be the general nature of the study. However, the statement and other aspects of the volume can be criticized as a type of "hiding one's light under a bushel basket," for this is an excellent and rich study of "a Socio-Economic Institution" which the authors state only in small type as a sub-title. This reviewer is perhaps biased towards this report. But it is extremely refreshing to see a study of a social institution which is *not* based on illogical deduction from scanty examples or logical argument based on hidden or false assumptions.

Another reason for the excellence of this report is its skillful combination of census taking of attitudes and social science analysis of the interrelation of attitudes and the relation of attitudes to socio-economic data. This is survey work or public opinion polling at its best, and is a positive demonstration of the function and value of these tools in social science research.

The authors are to be commended for the careful presentation of method and technique used in collecting the data. Not only for reports of polling but for many types of sociological research reporting this aspect of the volume might be used as a model. Consideration is given to such items as the conditions at the time of the study, sampling, question design and questioning, interviewing and technique of analysis. On the basis of the material contained in this work and the references to technical publications of the Survey Research Center this study could be reproduced by an independent agency. As compared to the scanty information on technique and method reported in many studies this feature alone would make the present study valuable.

The volume is divided into four major parts plus an introduction setting up the frames of reference, and very thorough appendices. The four major parts present the substantive findings and analysis. Part I, Views on Big Business as an Institution, includes the definitions of "Big Business" as given by the respondents with their evaluation of good and bad points associated with big business; Part II, Views on Specific Aspects of Big Business, presents material on the respondents' views related to government control of big business, concentration of big business and the attitudes of consumers, employees and citizens; Parts III and IV contain analyses of the interrelation of attitudes and the relation of attitudes to socio-economic factors.

The conclusions reached in the study might be summarized briefly as follows: 1) There is no single or simple construct for the concept "Big Business" in our society; 2) for the country as a whole (the large majority of the respondents) the good effects of big business outweigh the bad effects; 3) there are some definite items on which the "public" criticizes big business; 4) there is little or no relationship between census, or socio-economic, characteristics of the respondents and their opinions; and 5) there is slight internal relationship between opinions on one item and opinions on other items.

The lack of pertinent relationships found between opinions and between opinions and census data may be due to the lack of any universal construct of the concept "big business." As is unfortunately true with many opinion surveys the sample is too small to make statistically significant analyses of sub-constructs and subdivisions of opinion. However, the authors are to be commended for their courage in using very small percentages and small percentage differences as a basis for tentative analysis and discussion.

As a minor criticism, it is unfortunate that such a valuable volume should have so many typographical errors and, at least in the volume used by this reviewer, so poorly bound. After only a little use pages became loose and the binding broke.

JOSEPH E. BACHELDER
University of Illinois

The Community Press in an Urban Setting. By MORRIS JANOWITZ. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1952. 256 pp. $3.50.

The weekly English-language newspapers "addressed to the residents of a specific area of the urban metropolis" has been neglected by stu-

This content downloaded from 128.235.251.160 on Sat, 13 Dec 2014 09:52:03 AM
All use subject to JSTOR Terms and Conditions